



Let's Go Swimming on Doomsday

Natalie C. Anderson

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Forced to become a child soldier, a sixteen-year-old Somali refugee must confront his painful past in this haunting, thrilling tale of loss and redemption for fans of *A Long Way Gone* and *What is the What*

When Abdi's family is kidnapped, he's forced to do the unthinkable: become a child soldier with the ruthless jihadi group Al Shabaab. In order to save the lives of those he loves, and earn their freedom, Abdi agrees to be embedded as a spy within the militia's ranks and to send dispatches on their plans to the Americans. The jihadists trust Abdi immediately because his older brother, Dahir, is already one of them, protégé to General Idris, aka the Butcher. If Abdi's duplicity is discovered, he will be killed.

For weeks, Abdi trains with them, witnessing atrocity after atrocity, becoming a monster himself, wondering if he's even pretending anymore. He only escapes after he is forced into a suicide bomber's vest, which still leaves him stumps where two of his fingers used to be and his brother near death. Eventually, he finds himself on the streets of Sangui City, Kenya, stealing what he can find to get by, sleeping nights in empty alleyways, wondering what's become of the family that was stolen from him. But everything changes when Abdi's picked up for a petty theft, which sets into motion a chain reaction that forces him to reckon with a past he's been trying to forget.

In this riveting, unflinching tale of sacrifice and hope, critically-acclaimed author Natalie C. Anderson delivers another tour-de-force that will leave readers at the edge of their seats.

Let's Go Swimming on Doomsday Details

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From Reader Review Let's Go Swimming on Doomsday for online ebook

Brian says

Abdi lives in Somalia and has to deal with some horrific stuff. The book flashes back between the present as the past as we learn about Abdi's brother, Dahir's abduction from his own home and into a radical religious group hellbent on getting revenge on non believers. Abdi is recruited by an American to infiltrate his brother's group and reveal their plans of attack. In the present, we find out that Abdi survives but is missing several fingers. The book does an excellent job of jumping between the past and the present and filling in the holes that are left in the book at the beginning. The characters are appropriately written and are very sad. This was a very good page turner and an excellent read!

Adelina says

WHAT. THE. FUCK

A **young adult** novel focused on a member of an **ACTUALLY EXISTING terrorist organization**

WHAT THE FUCK?

AM I THE ONLY ONE WHO THINKS THIS IS JUST WRONG?

Jessica Haney says

4.5 stars

Serxxx83 says

Oooh,hard one to rate! I liked it,I think it's realistic in so many ways, but I doubt there are many «happy endings» in real life... i know it's not a nonfiction or memoir, but a YA , but still the ending was a bit «easy»

Warda says

Not many books that I know off that are set in my motherland.
I am intrigued by this.

Angela says

The cover art alone... ???
I need this book

Teenreadsdotcom says

Megan Miranda is well known for her bestselling novels which include ALL THE MISSING GIRLS and THE PERFECT STRANGER. She has also written the books FRACTURE, HYSTERIA, VENGEANCE, SOULPRINT and THE SAFEST LIES. As with FRAGMENTS OF THE LOST, Miranda tends to focus on the mystery genre. FRAGMENTS OF THE LOST is similar to the popular books 13 REASONS WHY by Jay Asher and WE WERE LIARS by E. Lockhart.

When Jessa Whitworth's ex-boyfriend Caleb dies in a tragic car accident she finds herself hurled down memory lane as she cleans out his old room. His mother blames her for his death and she can't help but feel guilty about her last few moments with him. As she dives deeper and deeper into his life she realizes that their relationship and his life may not have been as it seemed.

The reader is taken on a journey through Caleb and Jessa's relationship. As Jessa rummages through Caleb's belongings, she discovers a variety of intriguing clues about what really happened on that stormy night. This mystery has various unpredictable twists and turns that keep the reader on the edge of their seat.

FRAGMENTS OF THE LOST possesses an interesting plot with less than inspiring characters. I really enjoyed the way the author described the relationship through the photos and objects that Jessa encounters, with each item connected to a specific moment in their relationship. I also loved the unpredictable ending which had numerous surprises.

Although there were some good attributes, I found Jessa, the main character, and Caleb, her ex, to be very unlikable. Jessa is a jealous girlfriend and feels threatened by other people in Caleb's life. She is also very dependent on Caleb and often has irrational behavior. If he doesn't return a call or a text she overreacts and becomes very upset. On the other hand, as Jessa discovers, Caleb is not exactly the most transparent person. Often times, he hid important information from her regarding his past and family life. Personally, it is hard to read a book when I'm not a fan of the main characters. The actions of both the protagonists were questionable at times.

I would recommend FRAGMENTS OF THE LOST to a teen who is looking for a juicy mystery novel with many unforeseeable plot twists.

Kiki Cole says

This book was definitively difficult to read. With its topics of violence, sexual abuses, and religious terrorist groups, this Somali based story gave no air to breathe. Every page felt like a constant struggle where I even felt on edge and as if eyes were watching me. For Abdi, our brave and persistent MC, he was so young to

have to mature and experience all of the hardship and blood at 16. I gave this a 4 stars rating because although this story was a unique tale that I would have never thought would be released into the world, something was lacking. I understand why because there did not seem to be a clear fluidity where the story just skated in a straight line, but it was a hectic rollercoaster ride. It is an honest and raw story that does not attract the light-hearted. Those who experience war or have faced difficult times can handle this story about a young boy risking it all for his family as I hope we all would.

Shauna Yusko says

I liked this one even more than the authors previous book. I think there are several memoirs that would pair with this one.

My only real hesitation is that it always makes me pause when author writes realistic fiction about a place and people that she has not been to nor is her own. There is an author's note that address this.

Jesse bowtiesandbooks says

Synopsis:

Abdi is 13 when his older brother is kidnapped at school by a terrorist organization. 3 years later, Abdi is kidnapped and tortured for 3 days in a cell by the CIA, who give Abdi a mission: infiltrate Al-Shaabab and gather information on his brother, who is very much alive and now a terrorist leader.

If Abdi refuses, his entire family will be killed. He accepts the offer to go undercover as a soldier for Al-Shaabab, in hopes of rescuing his brother and securing passports for him and his family to leave Somalia and start a new life: But at what cost?

Review:

This book has the power to be as impactful as *The Hate U Give*. Critical elements such as suspense, pacing, plot, and character development were all 5 stars, despite occasional cliché dialogue. However, the story's true power lies in its meaningful themes:

~*Moral ambiguity*: What are you willing to do to save your family? Would you kill? Would you sacrifice yourself?

~ *Mental health* in Somali youth

~ *Survivor guilt* and redemption

~ *Joy* as a means of resistance and survival

I fell in love with the **gorgeously written, but heavy one-liners, which contrasted the novel's traumatic events; it seemed impossible that such beautiful writing could contain such horror.** Still, I have rarely been so immersed in a story or committed to its outcome. I loved the use of flashbacks to create a complete image of Abdi's past and present. Sometimes flashbacks create a disorganized narrative, but these fit seamlessly and were impeccably placed. In fact, the flashbacks help you meet and fall in love with Abdi's vibrant family, to help you understand why he would do such unspeakable things to protect them.

It also created an incredible amount of suspense and tension. **Abdi's narration voice is engrossing, even funny at times**, despite that he is drowning from PTSD, like so many Somali kids who have grown up in a land ravaged by war. It was important to see life in a home where bombings are common; as Americans, we have had war visited upon our soil, but it has never once been a daily reality for us. The book also illustrates the consequences of war on girls, who always pay the ultimate price for male conquest.

For all of these reasons, I fell in love with this book. Abdi is an incredible character and represents so many misunderstood boys worldwide. My favorite theme was how **black characters used spending time together as a way to reclaim their autonomy and heal from trauma** - when you live under an oppressive regime, joy is a revolutionary act.

An important note: The author has spent 10 years working with the United Nations and with refugees, but **this is still not an Own Voices novel. In an authors note, the author calls out that she writes from a white, western perspective, and recognizes she brings inherent biases into the novel.** (The only time I felt she was writing with bias was when she described the practice of wearing Hijab. I disliked that the book harshly represented the practice of wearing hijab; it failed to include important reasons why some muslim women do choose to wear it) I found this note to be incredibly self aware and transparent.

I was highly anticipating this book, but completely unready for how incredibly it changed me. ~~Do not~~ let the heavy subject matter deter you from reading this phenomenal piece of contemporary fiction - **this book holds immense joy, hope, and waves of courage. If you only read one book this year, make it this one.**

Content warning: kidnapping, sexual assault, brainwashing, terrorism
Representations: Somali, PTSD, physical disabilities, muslim

B. says

Thank you very much to penguin teen for advanced copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

I honestly cannot stress enough how much I loved this book. I've had a string of slightly disappointing reads recently, but within minutes of starting this book, I was hooked. The writing invoked a very clear mental image of what was going on, and this book told an unforgettable story with characters I adored.

Let's go Swimming on Doomsday was a story about Abdi, a boy who loses his brother to a terrorist group as a teenager. Years later, his family broken and his home taken away, Abdi is forced to join the very group that took his brother in order to save his family.

Even though he is able to escape the group after months in their ranks, the ghosts of the past still haunt him as he lives on the streets of Kenya. He is taken in by a social worker, who then helps Abdi come to grips with his past as he learns what it means to have peace in a war torn life.

The book is told in alternating chapters of then and now. At first, the format was a little bit confusing, but I

grew to love it. I was constantly on the edge of my seat wanting to know what happened in both the past and the present of the story, which kept me turning pages throughout the entirety of the book. I absolutely loved the writing style that Natalie C. Anderson has, as it so clear and thought provoking. It was descriptive without losing your interest or the main plot points, which is something I always look for in a book.

I loved Abdi's character. He was a boy with a good heart forced to do terrible things to protect the people he loved. He was an amazing character to read about, and his strength and his determination is something I will remember for a long time. Though he himself is fictional, his situation is a reality to many people in countries affected by war and terrorism. Seeing the hope his character learned to find was something I think everyone can learn from, despite their situation or their nationality.

I also loved the side characters. The social worker in the story, Sam, is so good hearted and beautifully human. I loved how social workers were put in a positive light in this story, as they can sometimes be poorly portrayed in novels. Other characters in the novel also stole a piece of my heart. I enjoyed the fact that all the characters in the novel had a distinct place and role. Sometimes secondary characters are very flat and are unneeded in a story, but the cast of this novel were perfectly chosen and crafted.

This book had a major impact on me, and I absolutely think it is a book that sheds light and brings awareness to some very important topics. It is brutally honest about violence and war, without being too violent in the descriptions. It definitely opened up my eyes to parts of the world I'd never read about before, and brings an appreciation to me about some of the ways terrorism affects certain countries. After finishing this book, I went on a long walk to process it and really reflect on the light it has shone on some of the dark parts of humanity that can easily be swept under the rug sometimes.

Overall, Let's go Swimming on Doomsday is a title that I highly recommend. It combined an impactful story, amazing and hopeful characters, and a beautiful writing style into one page turner. It comes out in just over a week on January 15th, so I highly recommend pre-ordering it or purchasing it on its release. It is a story that will stick with me for a long time, and one I definitely plan on revisiting again in the future.

Shanah says

For this review and many others, please visit - <https://bionicbookwormblog.wordpress.com>

As soon as I saw the GORGEOUS cover and read the synopsis – I knew that this would be a book that would leave a lasting impact. I wasn't wrong! This book FAR exceeded my expectations! I read a book by this author before. It was called City of Saints and Thieves and I really enjoyed it. It wasn't perfect, but there were a few things that she did really well. I loved her writing, the dimensions and completeness of her characters, her setting descriptions – and she actually made me enjoy a mystery! So I was very excited to read this novel!

Almost immediately I was attached to this book. I picked it up with the intention to read a couple chapters..... before I knew it, a few hours had passed and I had read half the book! The writing sucked me in from the first page and made me desperate to know more!

I will admit that the beginning of the book was a little disorienting and hard to keep track of. We follow Abdi

in multiple points in his life. We see him now, after he was strapped to a suicide bomber vest, the point where he became a child soldier, the time he was kidnapped – all the while we saw flashbacks to his childhood. I struggled with this through the first 100 pages or so.... there was so much to learn about him, his life and his family. But, in the end, this was a VERY effective way to demonstrate his struggles and what made him who he is. The character development that was allowed through this format was absolutely phenomenal! Not only for Abdi, but for all the characters involved. We get to see them at different points in their lives and how certain events shaped them.

Abdi as a character was so full of emotion. He's a good kid. He just wanted a happy quiet life with his family. But when his brother was taken from school by "The Boys" and wasn't heard from again, he feared the worst. Then him and his family are kidnapped, and he's given a ray of hope. He finds that his brother is actually alive. But all hope is taken away when he's given a choice..... him and his whole family dies unless he agrees to be a spy and join The Boys.... which should be easy because his brother is now one of the leaders of this group. Obviously not much of a choice there.

This is where Abdi's struggles really begin. He's trying to find out where his brothers loyalties lie while also trying to find that brotherhood connection they had as children. But worst of all is that he's forced to do things that he could never imagine. He's forced to serve, train, kill, and torture. He's turning into the person he's feared his whole life, just to save his family.

Then there's also the relationships that he forms after he gains his freedom. He's seen some awful things and has no clue who he can trust. Like I said, he's a really great kid who is soft and kind hearted. He wants so badly to be able to trust and look forward to planning a future. I can't explain just how much I loved the characters and their development in this book!

I also need to mention that the pacing in this book was non stop. There was so much that happened that built up to a larger picture. I finished this book in 2 sittings because I was so immersed I lost all track of time. This wasn't an easy read though. If you're triggered by war, murder, rape, torture, and all thing in between, this might not be for you. But the message that this book conveys is well worth the discomfort.

I honestly can't recommend this book enough!!! It was SO good and SO well written! Thank you so much to Penguin Random House Canada for the opportunity to read and review this novel. This does not influence my opinion. All thoughts and opinions within this review are my own and uninfluenced.

Tucker (TuckerTheReader) says

A book about child enslavement, kidnapping and war. Just what I need when I'm depressed and anxious.

Alicia says

My feelings-- hmm. It's a tough one because the topic is on point and it's both representative of a global issue, the battles of religion and politics, wars in which children are used and abused among horrific violence and destruction with glimmers of hope.

But clocking in at 500 pages, the non-linear storytelling that tries to quicken the pace just couldn't with such

a heft to the story. It's a journey. It's about relationships. I get all of that but the students that would benefit the most from this story either as a mirror, window, or sliding glass door might not engage simply based on it's thickness. I hate to be the bearer of that bad news and even I finally stopped investing because there was just so much story.

I was also disappointed to find out that the author, while addressing the issue does absolutely help the case, never traveled to the area (but obviously did extensive research) and as she states, is not from the culture, region, nor same race. Especially with so many biographies and autobiographies from those that have survived and persevered, I'd rather share that with a student that this fictionalized one.

The cover art and title are catchy enough though.

Bang Bang Books says

I really liked *City of Saints and Thieves* and I wanted to like this too but...

If you follow my reviews, you'll know that I don't enjoy on-the-nose style of writing. That means I don't like the type of writing where the reader isn't allowed to think-it's all black and white. Where everything is laid out for you. I like books that challenge the reader through metaphorical language or symbolism. Some of my favorite books are by Maggie Stiefvater and John Green because colors or nature or animals symbolize something and it's up to the reader to figure it out. One of my favorite lines from *We Were Liars* by E. Lockhart was I don't suffer fools-you can discuss that quote for hours. Lockhart doesn't tell you why the book is titled, *We Were Liars*, you have to figure it out through her story. I like a lot of gray. This is one of the main reasons why I didn't like this book but it doesn't necessarily means the book is bad; it's just not what I like.

The pacing was my second reason. It is **TOO DAMN LONG!** 433 pages to be exact. I liked the non-linear plot but the MC, Adbi, just repeated his feelings which leads me to my biggest issue.

This story is about Abdi and how he was tasked with being a spy in the Al Shabab terrorist group. That right there is a nuanced setting and plot because this is not the traditional story we get in YA fiction. And this is probably why you are going to read this book. However, the way the book is written, we don't really get to experience what it is like to be in a terrorist group. Abdi could have been an abused teen in Texas or a homeless teen in Florida or a Wisconsin teen who's town was just invaded by a UFO. My point is, Adbi's experience inside the terrorist group and the way he dealt with the aftermath was not unique. His situation was nuanced but the way he dealt with it could have been from any of the various contemporary YA fiction books we've all read and that's a missed opportunity.

As I stated above, the plot is non-linear so it jumps from before he was in Al Shabab to while he was in Al Shabab to after his escape. During the after-his-escape chapters, he just displays normal symptoms of paranoia-nothing unique to his Al Shabab situation. When he's inside it, he's worried for his family, one again nothing special to see here. The only interesting moments was when the Butcher spoke. He was basically the brain washer and it was interesting listening to his speeches about how Al Shabab was God's will and they were all doing God's work. This is what suicide bombers are told so as a reader who has never experienced any of this, it was interesting to see how someone is brainwashed to kill innocents and take their own life in the process. But that was a minor portion of this story.

99% of this book is told in 1st person from Abdi's POV but one time it switches to 3rd POV from a character who is punished then one time to a different 3rd POV from a random character. It seemed like Anderson didn't know how to tell her story without these random POV switches and that was not okay. Either write it all in 3rd person or switch POV's through out. The character who was being punished was meant to be a shocking chapter into the mind of a person who is being whipped but this story is not about that character. It should have been from the POV of Abdi and how seeing this affected him. Or, Anderson could have made a connection to another character in Abdi's after-the-escape chapters.

Finally, that ending was way over the top. For the first half of the book, I kept picturing Abdi as a 13 year old because he was written as an immature meek boy but he's 16 and has seen and done horrible things. In the last couple of chapters, he's suddenly this confident teen who takes down the leader? I know this part of the story was meant for entertainment value but it was just way too over the top to take it remotely seriously.

Overall, the title is GREAT and the cover is GREAT and the setting is GREAT but the execution was disappointing. There was some potential for some dynamic characters in Bashir, a fellow boy soldier, and Musa, a 16-year- old pregnant girl who was a wife of one of the leaders. Even Abdi's brother could have been great. They had tragic backstories but they ultimately fell flat. Unfortunate.
